

>> MINGLE: Hi everyone. I'm Mary Mingle. I'm from the WATCH Project in central Pennsylvania. And this is a story about a journey our organization began a few months ago to truly expand and enhance the existing partnerships with our employers and build new ones. We developed a few simple steps that you're going to learn about soon. From the very beginning of the process our employers were involved. All of those ways were the way we involved them, and we were always trying to get them to answer that one question right there. And we have a lot of data. We had a trusted advisors, we had sources of continuous feedback, but what we wanted to do was create collaborative relationships with those employers.

So this is what we did. First, we held a series of regional meetings over the summer, and we had them all over our region. Employers are more involved in our program than ever before as a result, and we used these four steps to make that happen. The first one is invite. You know, this seems so simple, but you have to be intentional. You have to cast a wide net. You have to reach out to a variety of health-care providers, and you have to be inclusive. So invite people. And we invited all kinds of employers, not just big players, because, you know, the small employers are the ones that really need the services, and they're seldom asked to come to the table, so you give them a voice and you really get a dedicated group of people. Our forums brought together nurse educators and employers. We shared our work and our outcomes. Our workforce development shared their labor market data. Our educational partners explained how they were preparing the nurses.

Ask, which should come up very shortly. We asked employers, was the data reflecting their experiences and their hiring needs? What were the issues they were facing right now? Did it kind of make sense with what we thought we knew? And early on, we discovered that we had to construct some questions and some discussions to spark conversation. Some employers are really excited about sharing their thoughts, but we also learned that not every employer is going to jump at the chance to share in a new group, at least not at first. Employers may have other priorities you aren't even aware of, or they might have something new on their minds, something that's happened recently. So, although we were prepared with questions, we threw them away whenever we found that employers might have had a different interest.

Listen, I tell my daughter this all the time. To truly understand your audience and build trust you need to listen, and you need to listen actively. You need to be open to constructive feedback from employers. You have to be able to hear hard truths. The discussions confirm much of what we already suspected, a lot of the things you'll see on the slide. Employers were struggling to find motivated individuals who come to work, meet responsibilities, handle conflict, and continue to learn new things as the workplace changed. Watch and our partners both listened and learned that leadership development was a major need. Since many new nurses get put into supervisory positions almost immediately, conflicts arise and employers were looking for ways to retain and develop new employees.

You know, then the last step is you have to respond. Now here is where a lot of initiatives get hung up. You have to respond to what you just heard and do it quickly. And here's a few ways we responded. When an employer wanted to know more -- this was a new employer -- we went.

We sent someone to them to talk to them. When an employer heard about our CNA apprenticeship program and wondered, how will this help me, we went to that employer to hold a special meeting. When another employer wanted our data presentation so she could make a point to her board of directors she had been trying to make for several months, we shared it. When someone wanted to present at a peer meeting, someone brand new, we welcomed her. And when they wanted us to post jobs, we did it.

You know, then we heard about the leadership need, and so we have hosted a three-day leadership series with a leadership and business coach who has health-care experience. Here is a comment from one of the participants. They were very excited and engaged with this. This was for the HR people, the directors of nurses and those LPNs and RNs in supervisory positions. This was what they asked for, so this is how we responded. And we're developing and offering a leadership training for our watch LPNs and RNs right now. This is something that's going to happen in December, and guess what, our employers are helping us develop the content, and they're going to deliver it. So invite, ask, listen, and respond. It really seems very simple, but it is what you need to do to build a strong career pathway system. Thank you.